

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Lower Sonoran Field Office
21605 North 7th Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85027**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-AZ-P020-2011-010-EA

Legal Description and location: T. 1 N., R. 8 E., Section 2, W2, part, approximately four miles NNW of old US Highway 60 and Arizona Highway 88 in Apache Junction, Pinal County, Arizona. Access is from Apache Junction via Arizona Highway 88 and Bull Dog Mine Road.

Project Name: Treasure Chest Granite Pit Mineral Material Sale

Applicant: Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC.

Background

The BLM Lower Sonoran Field Office (LSFO) has completed Environmental Assessment (EA) #DOI-BLM-AZ-P020-2011-010-EA which documents the review of a mineral material sale application for 194,000 cubic yards of granite and associated materials on lands as described above. The subject lands are under the administration of the LSFO, and would be an expansion of lands currently mined for granite materials.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review of the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, and supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action to extract and process up to 194,000 yds³ of granite and associated materials over a period of five years, will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. This FONSI is based on criteria for significance as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27, and does not exceed those effects with regard to the context and intensity of impacts described in the EA as described below.

Context

The project is a site specific action that involves approximately 32 acres of federal lands adjacent to an existing granite mining operation. The EA analyzes the Applicant's proposal to implement enhanced security measures for public safety as well as the proposed pit expansion and mineral material sales application and associated operating procedures on federal mineral holdings as received by this office.

Intensity

- 1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Benefits of the Proposed Action include offering mineral materials for competitive and noncompetitive sale to allow private individuals or companies to provide resources for sale on public markets. It is the policy of BLM as derived from various laws including the Mineral Materials Act of 1947, and the Surface Resources Act of 1955, to make such commodities available for both public and private projects. Sales are made at fair market value, creating job opportunities and tax based revenues, which contribute to both local and regional economies.

Adverse effects include minor impacts to air quality and visual resources that may occur temporarily during mining and processing operations, but long term effects would be limited in scope.

- 2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

The decision to issue a mineral material sales contract in itself does not affect public health and safety. Site specific environmental analysis addresses the balance of resource protection with providing availability of mineral materials to the construction market. Public health and safety concerns have been evaluated directly under “Air Quality, Water Quality, Wastes, Hazardous or Solid, and Recreation” sections of the EA. Impact to public health and safety is expected to be minimal and therefore not significant based on the protective measures as described under those sections.

- 3) *Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

Proximity and access to the NFS lands to the north of the project area are considered the only unique characteristic of the geographic area; however, there would be no direct impact to these as a result of the Proposed Action. Access by the public to these lands will not be changed or modified, with the current access route preserved. The proposed area identified containing the mineral material resources does not contain lands under special designations such as park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

- 4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The lands identified in the Proposed Action are federal lands established as a community pit through regulations stated in 43 CFR § 3600.0-3. The adjacent private landowner is also the Applicant. Access to the active mine operations is through the Applicant’s private holdings. Public access for dispersed recreation into lands adjacent to the Proposed Action will not be affected. The surface use of this area is not unique and as identified in the EA, mining operations have occurred within the Goldfield Mining District, the location of the subject lands, since the late 19th century.

- 5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

There are no effects that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks as a result of aggregate mining in this area. This type of activity has occurred previously, and continues to occur on the same lands since the current operator (Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC) began operations in 1997. As a result, the anticipated effects of such activity can be predicted with a high degree of certainty.

- 6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

This decision is not precedent setting. Future mineral material sales applications will be analyzed for site specific impacts when an application is submitted. This decision does not represent a decision in principle about future consideration of applications. All future applications would require further NEPA analysis.

- 7) *Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The decision to approve a mineral material sale at the subject lands does not establish an assurance for future sales from which a cumulative impact analysis can be adequately addressed. No individually or significant cumulative effects are predicted as identified in the Cumulative Impacts section of the EA.

- 8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

A search of cultural records identifies two different surveys that were performed by BLM staff in support of processing other land use authorization requests. In addition, a field investigation was also performed by the BLM staff archaeologist in support of the Proposed Action. Clearance for the area was recommended in all instances, with no cultural resources identified.

- 9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

Staff review of the Proposed Action did not identify any threatened or endangered species or their habitat.

- 10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

To the best of my knowledge, the Proposed Action does not violate or threaten violation of any federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Lower Gila South RMP & EIS; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:

_____/s/_____

Emily Garber
Field Manager
Lower Sonoran Field Office

__12/06/2011_____

Date

Treasure Chest Granite Pit Mineral Material Sale Environmental Assessment

Introduction

EA No.: DOI-BLM-AZ-P020-2011-010-EA

Proponent: Mary Konshur, Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC.

BLM Contact: Karen Conrath, Geologist

Legal Description and location: The proposed action would occur on approximately 32 acres of federal lands located in T. 1 N., R. 8 E., Section 2, W2, part, approximately four miles NNW of old US Highway 60 and Arizona Highway 88 in Apache Junction, Pinal County, Arizona. Access is from Apache Junction via Arizona 88 and Bull Dog Mine Road.

I. PURPOSE AND NEED

Background: Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC, (TCGP) has submitted an application requesting a mineral material contract for 440,000 tons (194,000 yds³ volume equivalent) of granite and associated materials, which include decorative stone, boulders, gravel and fill, to be extracted over the next five years in order to continue operations at their existing facility. TCGP is currently authorized to extract materials under contract AZA-33719, which under term limits will expire Jan 02, 2012. Existing disturbance is approximately 80 acres under federal surface and mineral ownership, also described as Mineral Survey No. 4598. The subject lands administered by BLM located in the W2 of Section 2 and the E2 of Section 3, T. 1 N., R. 8 E., G&SR, Pinal County, Arizona. The proposed expansion is estimated at approximately 32 acres. Total mine disturbance including the proposed expansion would total approximately 115 acres. Fixed mine facilities are located just west of the mine site on adjacent private lands. Mining excavation would proceed northeast into the proposed expansion area. Average height of the active pit face would be approximately 40 ft., with pit walls mined to about 1H:1V. The planned final configuration of the pit would be nearly rectangular, with a maximum 40 ft. depth. The pit depth is limited by groundwater, which is encountered at about 40' below ground surface (bgs). Reclamation activities would take place once mining is complete. Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC anticipates mining operations to continue through 2022.

The site of the Proposed Action is located approximately 3.5 miles northeast of Apache Junction (see Figure 1). The existing site conditions indicate the ground surface is relatively flat with a gentle to moderately steep slope to the north approaching the Goldfield Mountains. Elevations range from 2,000 to 2,080 feet above mean sea level (amsl). The surrounding private land use is predominately rural residential. Lands immediately adjacent to the western edge of the mine are held in private ownership by the mine operators, and are used in support of mining operations. The current mining area and proposed

expansion are located within lands designated as the Bull Dog Community Pit. Surrounding vegetation is predominately Arizona Upland, Sonoran Desert Scrub.

The purpose of the action is to provide Treasure Chest Granite Pit, Inc. the opportunity to access additional mineral material for extraction at their existing operation. The need for the action is established by BLM's responsibility under the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) and the Materials Act of July 31, 1947, commonly referred to as the Materials Act, to respond to submissions of Mineral Material Contract Applications pursuant to the regulations at 43 CFR 3600. The decision to be made is whether or not to approve the mineral material sale.

Decision to be Made: This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in accordance with 40 CFR 1508.9, to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed mineral material contract. Based on an evaluation of alternatives and potential impacts, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will make a decision determining whether or not to approve a plan of operations for the proposed project and issue a mineral materials contract. The office authorized to make this decision is the Field Manager of the Lower Sonoran field Office, Phoenix District Office.

Conformance with Land Use Plan: The Proposed Action is subject to the Lower Gila South RMP & EIS (1988). This Proposed Action conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR §1610.5, and is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision: page 12, "Demand for saleable minerals would be met by sales or free-use permits on a case-by-case basis."

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans or Policies: The BLM decision would only authorize extraction of BLM minerals. Use of non-BLM land (e.g., private land, National Forest, State Trust land) is subject to the appropriate jurisdictional agency or private landowners' permission. The regulations at 43 CFR §3600.420(a)(6) require that Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC conduct all operations in a manner that complies with all pertinent Federal and State laws. BLM's authorization of the Proposed Action would include the requirement that Treasure Chest Granite Pit Inc., comply with the 43 CFR §3600 regulations.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public comments were solicited by letter to neighbors, adjacent land owners, and other city, county, state, and federal stakeholders. Comments were accepted by both email and the U.S. Postal Service for a period of 30 days. During the course of that time, two comments were received and are outlined in the section below.

II. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REMOVED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS

1. In order to continue mineral material extraction at the existing operation, Pinal County requested the applicant be required to apply a dust palliative as a form of permanent dust control on Bull Dog Mine Road. Bull Dog Mine Road utilized by the applicant is currently paved. The road Pinal County is referring to is the former Bull Dog Mine Road that has since been closed, and is not used to support mining operations. Additionally, the location of the unpaved portion of Bull Dog Mine Road Pinal County is referring to is located on private and State holdings, and

therefore, is beyond the scope of what can be analyzed in this document. The BLM has no jurisdiction over State and private lands.

2. A request to look at potential opportunities for additional recreation facilities for Pinal County and the City of Apache Junction's Parks and Recreation Department, once the mining activities have ceased. A reclamation plan for the closure of Treasure Chest Granite Pit is on file with the BLM, and is part of the long term plan for the life of the mine (LOM). Once reclamation is complete, the BLM would process requests for special land and recreation uses as they are received.
3. A request to monitor the *stormwater* storage pond found at the bottom of the existing pit for West Nile Virus is beyond the scope of what can be analyzed in this document. An annual program for surveillance of West Nile Virus is administered by the Arizona Department of Health Services, Vector-Borne & Zoonotic Disease Program. For further information and statistical results by year please refer to <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oids/westnile>.

III. THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Description of the Proposed Action: The Proposed Action consists of extracting and processing up to 440,000 tons (volume equivalent of approximately 194,000 yds³) of crushed stone and associated products over a period of five years on federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The total proposed long term disturbance is approximately 115 acres, 80 of which are under active mining operations. Evaluation of the current disturbance footprint includes the active pit, an integrated crushing-screening plant, material stockpiles, and a stormwater storage pond to catch runoff and groundwater seepage. According to the Mining and Reclamation Plan submitted by TCGP, details of the processing area are as follows:

- Equipment and processing facilities are currently on-site and in place;
- Mining is performed by ripping rather than blasting, therefore explosives are not necessary for normal operations;
- The processing/active pit area is bermed and/or bouldered with posted signage;
- Water for dust control is obtained from the water storage pond maintained in the pit;
- Office facilities, scales, and mobile equipment are located on adjacent private lands.

Access to the active mining area is from the west via the paved Bull Dog Mine Road. Unpaved haul roads are located within the pit floor and follow the advancing pit wall face. The road into the pit can only be accessed through the adjoining private lands. The existing roads servicing the pit are adequate to handle the traffic associated with the mining operation. No other alteration to the access road is planned.

Neither the current disturbance area, nor the proposed area of expansion have been identified as located within “Waters of the United States”, therefore a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 permit is not required. Other applicable permits for air, water, and hazardous materials are already in place including:

- A Pinal County Individual Air Quality Permit;
- Determination from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) that an Aquifer Protection Permit (APP) is not required;
- Registration with the Arizona Mine Inspector’s Office and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA)

Current site improvements consist of a crushing and screening plant utilizing a 54” cone crusher, a triple deck screen with five conveyors, a 350/400 kW diesel generator to supply power to the crushing/screening plant, and a 35 hp diesel pump for water supply from the storage pond.

Under the Proposed Action, no additional processing equipment would be added to the site. Fueling, equipment repairs and maintenance would be conducted either on the adjacent private land or at a commercial repair facility. Maintenance and repair of the processing equipment is generally performed in place.

Surrounding area land use is predominately rural residential, with limited recreation in the form of trails and historic mining sites. The Bulldog Mine, a former gold, silver and copper mine, is located just east and north of the current operations. Other historic mine sites are found farther east along SR 88, or the “Apache Trail”, including the ghost town of Goldfield, which is a popular tourist attraction. Additional crushed granite operations have been permitted on nearby State and private lands.

The boundary for the Tonto National Forest is found along the northern edge of the proposed expansion area. The National Forest System (NFS) boundary is approximately 300 ft. north with access to those lands via Hackamore Road. Hackamore Road delineates the eastern boundary of the proposed expansion, but is not identified as included within the proposed expansion. State lands are located east, west and south of the existing operating area.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: The No Action Alternative constitutes denial of the mineral material application associated with the Proposed Action, but would include continued operations of the Treasure Chest Granite Pit under AZA-33719 until the current contract volume limitation is reached, or contract term limitations are met. The 32 acre proposed expansion of the mining operation would not occur.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT AFFECTED

The following critical elements would not be affected by the Proposed Action or alternatives because they do not occur at the site of the Proposed Action or because of the nature of the Proposed Action:

- 1. Wildlife/Threatened and Endangered Species:** The Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires all Federal agencies to undertake programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species,

and prohibits from authorization, funding, or carrying out any action that would jeopardize a listed species or destroy or modify its “critical habitat”. The proposed project area does not contain suitable habitat for threatened and endangered species, nor would species designated as such be affected as a result of the Proposed Action.

2. **Cultural Resources:** Cultural records show that the entire section (Section 2) had been surveyed by BLM staff for the Apache Junction Open Space Equestrian Park R&PP project (BLM-020-18-118) in 1984. A 2003 survey was done in the northern portion of the proposed expansion area by BLM staff, documented as Reclamation of an Abandoned Mine and included coverage of 5 acres (BLM-200-21-349). On July 13, 2001, the BLM staff archaeologist with the Lower Sonoran Field Office surveyed the proposed expansion area for signs of cultural resources as well as indications of soil changes. No cultural resources or indicative soil changes were identified during the course of the survey. Clearance for the area was recommended, with standard stipulations for cultural resource protection attached to the new mineral material contract.
3. **Native American Religious Concerns:** The proposed project is not located on land that has been identified as having Native American religious concerns.
4. **Wild and Scenic Rivers:** No part of the Proposed Action impacts a Wild and Scenic River, a congressionally authorized study river, or water resources below, above, or on a stream tributary to a designated river, or congressionally authorized study river. The Proposed Action would have no effect on wild and scenic rivers.
5. **National Energy Policy:** The National Energy Policy requires an evaluation of access limitations to Federal lands in order to increase energy production. The Proposed Action is not an energy exploration or development project and has no impact on potential oil and gas exploration and development, as the area is generally unsuitable for those actions.
6. **Wetlands/Riparian Zones:** Wetlands are protected under the Clean Water Act and different criteria are used by agencies to classify wetlands to reflect variation in statutory protection management objectives. No identified wetlands or riparian zones are within or near the proposed project area. The Proposed Action would have no effect on wetlands or riparian zones.
7. **Prime Farmland:** The proposed project is not located on land that is currently farmed or on land that could be farmed. The Proposed Action would have no effect on Prime Farmland.
8. **Environmental Justice:** EPA defines Environmental Justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. The 32 acre site that defines the Proposed Action has no residential

population, with the exception of the adjacent private lands held by Treasure Chest Granite Pit, the mine operator. The Proposed Action would have no effect on Environmental Justice.

- 9. Wilderness:** The Proposed Action is not located near or within a designated Wilderness Area. The closest wilderness area is the Sierra Estrella Wilderness, located approximately 43 air miles southwest of the proposed project area. The Proposed Action would have no effect on wilderness.
- 10. Floodplain:** Pinal County Flood Control District regulates unincorporated areas lying within the 100-year floodplain to evaluate and control the risk of possible flood damage. The 100-year floodplain is defined as the area adjoining a watercourse that would be covered by water during a flood event having a 1 out of 100 chance of occurring in any given year. The project area is not located within a floodplain. Pinal County administers Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) requirements in accordance with Federal and State Regulations. A general permit for construction activities is not required due to the containment of runoff from storm events. The active mining area is sloped and contoured such that stormwater always flows internally into the pit. Storm runoff is directed into the pit, where it is stored either in the water storage pond, or within a catchment basin found at the bottom of the pit.
- 11. Travel Management:** The proposed mine expansion affects no known inventoried routes, therefore would have no effect on travel management.
- 12. Range Management:** No grazing allotments are located within the existing permitted or proposed expansion area. The Proposed Action would have no effect on range management.

B. CRITICAL ELEMENTS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

The following Critical Elements are or could be affected by the Proposed Action. The potential impacts, and the mitigation measures to be used to reduce these impacts, are discussed below.

- 1. Air Quality:** Although specific performance standards regarding air quality standards for mineral material sites are not specified in 43 CFR §3600 regulation standards, the regulations at 43 CFR §3601.6(b) state that “BLM’s policy is to protect public land resources and the environment and minimize damage to public health and safety during the exploration for and the removal of such minerals”.

Air quality standards are defined in accordance with Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) §49-480 and Pinal County Air Quality Control District Code of Regulations §3-1-040. An individual Pinal County Air Quality Permit regulating particulate emissions and establishing applicable limitations was issued January 8, 2010 for a term of 5 years. The proposed project area is situated in an area classified as “nonattainment” for all PM₁₀ particulate pollutants. Pinal County instituted new non-attainment area rules in 2009 in order to control excessive fugitive dust emissions found in T. 1 N., R. 8 E, the defined area of nonattainment.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Impacts of the Proposed Action on air quality would be from fugitive dust or equipment (rolling stock) emissions. Particulate matter emission limitations are set

forth in the permit with compliance demonstration monitoring standards. Equipment emission control requirements include that all processing and conveying equipment in the crushing and screening operations be equipped with water spray bars adequate to comply with opacity limitations set forth in the permit. Water trucks shall be used as necessary to control fugitive PM₁₀ emissions from the mining, crushing, and screening operations, and along the unpaved haul roads. All equipment would have current pollution controls as required by the EPA during manufacture. The Proposed Action would be conducted such that the standards set forth in the Pinal County Air Quality Control permit are met.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, monitoring and control of dust emissions under the current contract would still occur as set forth in the permit until volume and/or term limitations are met. The existing operations at the Treasure Chest Granite Pit would still be held to a specific provisions and acceptable emission limitations as described in the Pinal County Air Quality Control Permit.

2. **Wildlife / Other Than Threatened and Endangered Species – Sonoran Desert Tortoise:** BLM has mapped the project area as located within the southern edge of the “Goldfield Mountains Category III Habitat” for the Sonoran Desert Tortoise. Category III is defined as an area with habitat not essential to maintenance of viable Desert Tortoise populations. Field review was completed during a July 13, 2011 inspection by the BLM wildlife biologist. No tortoise signs or potential shelter sites were identified as a result of the site visit.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: No direct impacts to wildlife, including the Desert Tortoise, would occur within the proposed project area as a result of the Proposed Action. No known habitats for other wildlife species have been identified within the proposed project area.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative would have no direct impacts to wildlife within the project area. This alternative would not change the current wildlife habitat condition or the ongoing low level of human disturbances of local wildlife.

3. **Wastes, Hazardous or Solid:** The affected area for hazardous materials includes air, water, soil, and biological resources that may potentially be affected by an accidental release of hazardous materials during transportation to and from the project area, and use in operations. Sensitive areas for hazardous materials releases include areas adjacent to water bodies, above aquifers, and those areas where humans or wildlife would be directly impacted.

BLM Instruction Memoranda WO-93-344 require that all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents list and describe any hazardous and/or extremely hazardous materials that would be produced, used, stored, transported, or disposed of as a result of a proposed project. Common industry practices for use of these materials and disposal of waste products are dictated by various Federal and State laws and regulations, and the BLM standard stipulations that accompany a mineral material contract.

According to the TCGP mining plan, all mobile equipment is maintained off the property, either on adjacent private land or at a commercial repair facility. Although maintenance and repair of the crushing plant is generally done in place, major components needing repair are sent to off-site commercial shops. Storage of all maintenance fluids and fuel is on the adjacent privately owned land. Dual containment tanks are used for fuel storage.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Possible pollutants that could be released during mining activities would include diesel fuel, hydraulic fluid, and lubricants. These materials would be used during normal operational and processing activities performed by the equipment and vehicles. None of these materials used in facility operations meet the criteria for an acutely hazardous material/substance, or meet the quantities criteria per BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 93-344. In addition, no extremely hazardous substance, as defined in 40 CFR 355, in amounts above threshold planning quantities would be produced, used, stored, transported, or disposed of during operation of the facilities. Solid waste (human waste, garbage, etc.) facilities are located within the shop and office facilities found on the adjacent privately owned land. These laws, regulations, and standard contract stipulations, are expected to adequately mitigate any potential hazardous or solid waste issues associated with the Proposed Action.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Under the No Action alternative, mining activities would continue, as permitted under AZA-33719, until volume limitations of the contract are met. Current federal laws and regulations applicable for the handling of wastes at the site, and standard stipulations of the existing contract, would remain in effect for the existing operations, and are anticipated to mitigate any potential pollutants, as described above, through the duration of the existing contract.

- 4. Water Quality, Drinking or Ground:** Water for dust control is delivered to the processing site and haul roads via a 3,200 gallon water truck. Water is pumped from the water storage pond to the water truck by a 35-hp diesel generator. Water used during normal operations for dust control varies from approximately 6,400 gallons per day (gdp) in summer to less than 600 gpd in the winter (Treasure Chest Granite Pit Mining and Reclamation Plan, 2003). Potable water is sourced from a well located on the adjacent private land. According to the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR), static water level for this well is listed at 57 feet below ground surface (bgs). Groundwater level based on this data is approximately 1,943 feet above mean sea level (amsl). Annual precipitation is approximately 11½ inches for Pinal County, with 39 days of measurable precipitation. Intense storm events have the potential to create an influx of run-off from upland areas to the north. Stormwater run-off from these events have been successfully diverted into the detention basin found in the pit bottom. Areas previously disturbed by mining operations have been sloped and recontoured such that any run-off is directed internally, where it is stored until infiltration/evaporation occurs. Authorized by the Clean Water Act (CWA), and regulated by EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program, industrial facilities that do not discharge directly to surface waters are not required to obtain a NPDES permit. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) administers and implements stormwater NPDES permits for the State of Arizona.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Through the use of contract stipulations and best management practices (BMPs) associated with operational activities at the site, and the implementation of those preventative measures, control of potential stormwater discharge, and resulting potential impacts to surface or groundwater would be minimized and/or eliminated.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Under the No Action alternative, ongoing activities related to the mining and processing of crushed granite under the current contract would still take place within the existing project area, until volume and/or term limitations are met. Mining activities would continue to be conducted such that regulatory framework required by the Clean Water Act are met.

Recreation: Surrounding BLM and NFS lands are used by the public for dispersed recreational activities, which may include horseback riding, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. Access to the National Forest System (NFS) lands is via Hackamore Road, which is located just east of the proposed expansion boundary (see Figure 1). Unauthorized access to the existing mining operations has taken place through the NFS boundary fencing. In order to reduce unauthorized access, a security barrier made up of large boulders would be erected within the expansion area south of the NFS boundary. Approximately 800 linear feet of bermed rock barrier would be placed south of the NFS boundary within the proposed expansion area. Additional enhancement of the existing security barrier along the west margin of Hackamore Road would prevent access to the mining operations from Hackamore Road as well. The intent is to secure the active pit site from unauthorized motorists, in order to provide greater public safety.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would have no impact on recreation opportunities available within the NFS lands or adjacent BLM lands. Hackamore Road, and access to NFS lands via Hackamore Road, would not be impacted by the expansion. Access to BLM lands outside of the proposed expansion area for dispersed recreational activities would be maintained.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Under the No Action alternative, activities related to the mining and processing of crushed granite would still take place under the existing contract until volume and/or term limitations are met. Placement of the security barrier(s) to prevent unauthorized access to the current mining activities would not take place. Unauthorized access to the Treasure Chest Granite Pit operations by OHV recreationists may continue, although existing recreational opportunities available within NFS lands or adjacent BLM lands would not be affected.

5. **Visual Resources Management (VRM):** Landscape character of the project area is best described as generally flat, sloping gently (~4%) to the south. The mine site is located within the foothills of the Blue Ridge area of the Goldfield Mountains. Elevations range from 2010' at pit bottom, to 2150' at the northern most extent of the proposed expansion area. Surrounding land use is NFS lands to the north, the historic Goldfield Mining District to the east, and rural residential and state trust lands to the south and west. The active mining operations are not visible from State Route 88, the main highway accessing the area from Apache Junction. Open space areas along all sides of the presently permitted area shield the ongoing mining activities within the pit itself. Management activities take place on the adjacent private holdings, accessed via Bull Dog Mine Road, and do not

affect access to adjoining open space. Mine traffic is confined to the pit area and the haul road connecting to the office and scale facilities.

Management directives under the current resource management plan, the Lower Gila South RMP & EIS (1988), does not establish visual resource management (VRM) classes for public lands in this area, but does provide for evaluations for the compatibility and significance of the proposed project with regard to the visual sensitivity of the affected area. Most recently, a Visual Resource Inventory was performed by Otak, Inc., in September, 2010, identifying this area as Class IV for visual resource management (VRM). The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape, which is consistent with current management objectives for visual resources in this area.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Short term visual impacts from erecting the proposed security barrier would occur from the proposed project activities. Impacts to visual resources would be limited to support of the current mining and crushing activities in the form of the presence of heavy equipment (e.g., front end loaders, dozers) and vehicular traffic with an associated increase in dust and emissions. Specific impacts and associated mitigation is addressed in the Pinal County Air Quality Permit. Existing structures and facilities on the site would not be modified or expanded in order to continue operations within the proposed project area. The active operations would be further screened as a result of the increased and enhanced security barrier. The proposed action would not conflict with VRM Class IV management prescriptions.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: The ground disturbance associated with the existing operations would continue until volume and/or term limitations are met, and remain until final reclamation of the site occurs. Under the No Action alternative, the proposed new and enhanced security barrier would not be constructed, eliminating additional screening to the active operations.

6. **Noxious Weeds:** Naturalized open space areas are preserved along all edges of the property. Earthen berms separate the mining operations from the undisturbed area. A revegetation plan for final reclamation and pit closure has been developed for the site, and is in place.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The pit area is devoid of vegetation due to the ongoing mining activities. The proposed expansion area along the northern boundary of property would be mined and be incorporated into the existing pit. The other portion of the expansion area, that which borders the west edge of Hackamore Road, would be used only for barrier enhancement, thereby eliminating soil disturbance along that edge. No direct or indirect impacts are expected from the Proposed Action regarding noxious weeds.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Under the No Action alternative, mining operations would continue until volume and/or term limitations are met. The reclamation plan submitted under the existing mineral material sales contract would remain in effect.

7. **Cumulative Impacts:** Modifications of the area surrounding the existing operations have been characteristic of rural residences with surrounding small acreage. Recent growth has been in the

form of residential development on private holdings adjacent to SR 88 farther southeast of the mine site. In light of the recent economic downturn in the national and local economies, residential developments have all but disappeared. Demand for aggregate materials has decreased as well. Decreasing activity levels have decelerated potential impacts from development from the construction industry and indirectly, the aggregate industry. An equestrian park was developed at one time by the City of Apache Junction through a Recreation & Public Purposes (R&PP) action (A-19224) located to the south in Sections 9 and 10, but those lands were later relinquished. The existing and proposed project area is located within the historic Goldfield mineral district, and has incorporated some of the former workings (shafts) left behind from the once active Bull Dog Mine. Other abandoned mine sites are littered throughout the Mineral District, including the Goldfield Ghost Town, which today is a popular tourist attraction located farther east along SR88.

The anticipated impact levels for users of adjacent public lands range from negligible to locally minor. Enhanced separation between active mining operations and surrounding uses would provide greater safety for all specific users.

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would not change the existing impact of active mining within the project area. Mining within the existing project area boundary would continue. With the decreased rate of development currently taking place in the area, the accumulation of individually nominal effects of residential expansion would be minor. The Proposed Action would contribute incrementally to the collective impacts to air quality, but would remain under current statutory thresholds.

Cumulative Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Under the No Action alternative any cumulative site impacts identified within the property boundaries would remain, as the mining and operations activities would continue through authorization of an existing mineral material contract.

8. **MITIGATION MEASURES:** Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC would be required to comply with the Special Stipulations outlined by BLM and found in Appendix 2. Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC would also be required to comply the standard terms and conditions of a Mineral Material Contract, as well as all applicable Federal and State environmental regulations.

9.

V. PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

Pinal County Public Works Department, Arizona State Land Department, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), City of Apache Junction, the Tonto National Forest, Project Proponent, and BLM Specialists in the Lower Sonoran Field Office and Hassayampa Field Office were consulted during the preparation of this Environmental Assessment (EA).

VI. INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW

BLM participants in preparation of this EA are listed below:

Table 11. BLM Interdisciplinary Team Authors and Reviewers		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Areas of Participation</i>
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Cheryl Blanchard	LSFO, Archaeologist	Cultural Resources
JoAnn Goodlow	LSFO, Realty Specialist	Lands and Realty
Andrea Felton	LSFO, Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Steve Bird	LSFO, Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, Threatened and Endangered Species
William J. Ragsdale	LSFO, Recreation Planner	Recreation and Visual Resources
Emily Garber	LSFO, Field Manager	Review and general oversight
Tom Bickauskas	HFO, TravelManagement	OHV use and trails

Figure 1. - Treasure Chest Granite Pit Project Location Map.

Figure 2: - Treasure Chest Granite Pit Site Location Map

Appendix 1 - FONSI and DECISION RECORD

References:

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). Personal communication via email with Dennis L. Turner, R.G., regarding Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP), July 14, 2011.

Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR), 2005. Groundwater Site Inventory online interactive map. <https://gisweb.azwater.gov/waterresourcedata/GWSI.aspx>

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Pinal County Air Quality Control District, 2010. *Individual Pinal County Air Quality Permit #B30991.000*. Issued to Treasure Chest Granite Pit, LLC, for Treasure Chest Granite, Apache Junction, Arizona.

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